



# LEADERSHIP PROFILE REPORT

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Hanover County Public  
Schools  
February 2024

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the Leadership Profile Assessment conducted by Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates (HYA) in December 2024 and January 2025 for the new superintendent of the Hanover County Public Schools. The data contained herein were obtained from input the HYA consultants received when they met with stakeholders in either individual interviews or focus group settings and from the results of the online survey completed by parents, division, employees, students, and community members.. The surveys, interviews, and focus group meetings were structured to gather input to assist the Board in determining the primary characteristics desired in the new superintendent. Additionally, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups collected information regarding the strengths of the Division and some of the challenges that it will be facing in the coming years. The results from the online survey data are consistent with the input of the focus groups.

## Participation

The numbers of participants, by stakeholder group, in the two methods of data gathering are listed below: *Not all focus groups were a group that was disaggregated for the on-line survey.*

Group	Personal interviews or focus groups	Online Survey
Board	7	
Building level administrators	31	47
Central office administrators	33	
Faculty/Certified Staff	13	353
Community	86	86
Support Staff	3	58
Parents	10	739
Students	29	170
Community Leaders	6	
Gov's Leaders	4	
Total	222	1453

The community survey report and a draft of the desired characteristics are provided under separate cover and are meant to be stand-alone complementary pieces to the Leadership Profile Report.

It should be emphasized that the data are not a scientific sampling, nor should they necessarily be viewed as representing the majority opinion of the respective groups to which they are attributed. Items are included if, in the consultants' judgment, they warranted the Board's attention.

## STRENGTHS OF THE DIVISION

The Hanover County Public Schools offer a robust and well-rounded educational experience, firmly rooted in traditional community values and a commitment to student success. The division's educational programs, including International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP), and Career and Technical Education (CTE), provide diverse opportunities for academic achievement, with student testing scores, graduation rates, and literacy metrics consistently surpassing those of surrounding divisions. As reflected in the data collected during the focus groups as well as in the results of the survey, a significant strength of the division is the talented teaching staff, many of whom are former students, and a deep culture of collaboration and innovation that prioritizes student learning and well-being above all else. Additionally, the division's efforts to maintain classroom integrity and uphold high standards of instruction reflect its longstanding tradition of excellence.

A significant factor in the division's success is its strong sense of community and stakeholder engagement. Parents, local businesses, faith leaders, and community partners actively contribute to the schools, fostering a sense of pride and ownership in their success. The division's manageable size enhances this collaborative environment, creating a "small-town feel" where relationships among staff, students, and families thrive. The school board, supportive central office staff, and well-respected leadership further strengthen the division's reputation as a desirable place to live, work, and learn.

Safety and emotional well-being are cornerstones of the educational philosophy of Hanover County Public Schools. The division's partnership with the Sheriff's Department, robust mental health initiatives, and recent no cell phone policy demonstrate its commitment to creating secure and focused learning environments. Schools prioritize building connections between students and trusted adults, ensuring every child feels supported academically and emotionally. These efforts are

complemented by proactive programs addressing social and behavioral needs, enabling students to flourish in a safe and nurturing atmosphere.

The excellence of the Hanover County Public Schools is underpinned by its staff's resilience and dedication. As reported during focus group sessions and in the results of the survey, the students consistently perform well on all standardized assessments. Teachers, administrators, and support staff consistently go above and beyond, leveraging available resources creatively to meet the needs of all students. The division benefits from a mix of seasoned professionals and fresh perspectives, maintaining a balance between tradition and forward-thinking innovation. This combination of strong leadership, community involvement, and student-centered focus solidifies Hanover County's reputation as a leader in education and a model for other divisions across the state.

## CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACING THE DIVISION

The challenges facing the school division reveal a complex tapestry of systemic and cultural issues that require strategic planning and clear leadership. A common theme is accountability—both within the school system and in collaboration with the community. There is a consistent call for greater adherence to policies and regulations, transparency in decision-making, and clear accountability from administrators, teachers, and students. The lack of consistency in enforcing expectations has caused frustration among staff and community members, leading to a perception that the chain of command and decision-making processes are not always followed effectively. Building trust through accountability at all levels will be crucial to addressing this concern.

Another dominant theme is teacher retention and recruitment, which is tied closely to compensation and work-life balance. Competitive salaries and improved support structures are needed to address teacher shortages and ensure that educators feel valued. Teachers are expressing burnout, feeling unappreciated, and voicing frustration over increasing workloads, which have been exacerbated by state and federal mandates. These factors are driving talented educators to leave the division for better opportunities elsewhere. A sustained focus on improving teacher salary scales, providing professional development, and fostering a supportive environment will be essential to retaining and attracting top talent.

The division's changing demographics is another challenge that the new superintendent will be expected to address. Staff need to better reflect the student population, particularly as the number of English Language Learners (ELL) and special education students continues to grow. As reflected in the survey data, as well as information

collected during the focus group sessions, there are ongoing concerns about some community equity issues, and a perceived lack of a welcoming environment for all students. Addressing these challenges requires targeted professional development for teachers, increased attention to hiring practices, and the creation of inclusive policies that prioritize the well-being and success of all students.

Another area in which the new superintendent will need to focus is student achievement, particularly in reading and math proficiency. Early literacy and numeracy initiatives for Pre-K through second grade are vital to laying the foundation for long-term academic success. However, these efforts must be paired with investments in middle and high school programs, such as expanding elective choices, trade school opportunities, and extracurricular activities. These offerings not only enhance student engagement but also help address mental health concerns by providing outlets for creativity, connection, and growth. Ensuring access to these opportunities is essential for fostering student success across all demographics. In addition, using research-based strategies to inform decision making is a concern expressed by some respondents to the survey.

Facilities and infrastructure also pose significant challenges due to the division's enrollment growth and the state of aging school buildings. Overcrowded schools, the construction of new facilities, and the maintenance of older buildings require careful planning and fiscal responsibility. These challenges are further compounded by the need for more bus drivers, enhanced safety measures, and updated resources to keep pace with the division's needs. As the community expands, balancing the demands of growth while maintaining the small-town feel and high-quality services will be a delicate but necessary undertaking.

Lastly, communication and trust between the central office, schools, and the community emerged as a concern. Parents and staff feel disconnected from decision-making processes, citing inconsistencies in communication and a lack of transparency. Bridging this gap requires not only clear and consistent messaging but also active engagement with stakeholders. Strengthening relationships with parents, the school board, and local government will be critical to rebuilding trust and ensuring alignment on the shared goal of student success. Addressing these interconnected themes will require visionary leadership, strategic collaboration, and a steadfast focus on creating an inclusive, high-performing school division.

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HYA and the Board intend to meet the challenge of finding an individual who possesses most of the skills and character traits required to meet the needs of the division. The search team will seek a new superintendent who can work with the School Board to

provide the leadership needed to continue to raise academic standards and student performance, while meeting the unique needs of each of its schools and communities.

The search team thanks all the participants who attended focus groups meetings or completed the online survey and the HCPS staff members who assisted with our meetings, particularly Terry Stone who organized the search team's interviews, focus group meetings and community input sessions.

### **SUMMARY OF COMMENTS FROM FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS**

The structure of the focus groups was open, allowing for participants to build upon each other's comments. Participants were asked to respond to the following questions.

- What do stakeholders value regarding the schools? What strengths do they desire to retain and build upon?
- What are the issues this Division currently faces, and will face in the next three to five years?
- What personal and professional characteristics are expected in a new Superintendent?